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Building Name Honors Service of Former EIU Professor Louis M. Grado

Mar-11-2011

Growing up, the Grado children were accustomed to hearing the same question asked every night at the dinner table - "What have you done for humanity today?"

"Their father, Louis Grado, was focused on service - to his community, to the university and to the world," said Robert Martin, vice president for university advancement at Eastern Illinois University. "And we felt something needed to be done to recognize his legacy."

Accordingly, the EIU Board of Trustees on Friday voted to name a newly built structure, located at 975 Edgar Drive, the Dr. Louis M. Grado Building. This piece of property houses the university's Textbook Rental Service.

"The naming of this building after Dr. Grado symbolizes for all future generations of Eastern's students and faculty the spirit of excellence and service in education that he embraced and embodied," Martin said.

Grado, who died in July 2010 at age 86, was a member of EIU's education faculty from 1955 until his retirement on Aug. 31, 1989. He taught in the field of elementary education throughout his career, and served as chair of the Department of Elementary and Junior High School Education from 1970 until his retirement.

"Dr. Grado played an important role in the development of teacher training in the field of elementary education, and did much to strengthen and sustain the quality of this program at EIU," Martin said.

EIU President Bill Perry, who initiated the idea to name the building after Grado, said it was a fitting tribute.

"The building was funded by student fees, and since that was how it was built, it will always serve students in one way or another," he said. "The decision to name it after Dr. Louis M. Grado just seemed right."

Grado also served on many university committees, as well as the Illinois State Board of Education's Spanish Speaking Committee and Bilingual Advisory Board.

And from 1961-63, Grado took a two-year leave of absence to accept a position as elementary education adviser to a rural school in Esteli, Nicaragua. Working with the International Cooperation Administration, he was responsible for assisting in the development of an entire normal school, training the director and staff, establishing/supervising a student teaching program, and coordinating the school's program with an in-service teacher education program.

While there, Grado also made recommendations about what rural teachers should study and assisted in the development of Nicaragua's rural education. He participated in the development and production of an educational television program for preschoolers.

Active in the Mattoon (Ill.) Presbyterian Church, Grado served as an elder and trustee at various times. His volunteer work also included serving as a counselor to Hispanic inmates at the Vandalia Correctional Center, constructing homes for Habitat for Humanity, serving meals at various soup kitchens, and greeting visitors at St. Luke's Hospital.

A formal dedication of the Dr. Louis M. Grado Building with members of Grado's family in attendance is tentatively scheduled to take place later this spring. He is survived by five children -- Gordon Grado of Scottsdale, Ariz.; Charles Grado of Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Rebecca Surber of Lisle; Jana Richards of Vandalia; and Abigail Grado of Litchfield.



Shown, from left to right, are Abigail Grado, Gordon Grado, Louis Grado, Mary Grado (Gordon's wife), and Rebecca (Grado) Surber.